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# Correlates and predictors of union satisfaction and union commitment

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Correlates and Predictors of  
Union Satisfaction and Union Commitment

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by

Patricia L. VanBuren

A Thesis Submitted to the  
Graduate Faculty in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of  
MASTER OF SCIENCE

Major: Industrial Relations

Approved:

Signatures have been redacted for privacy

✓

Iowa State University  
Ames, Iowa

1991

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## INTRODUCTION

For American labor, the decision to become and remain union members is based on the expectation that by doing so, they will attain valued work outcomes. Union goals focus on offering acceptable wages and a measure of job security by negotiating "property rights" to workers' jobs, at least for the duration of collective bargaining agreements (Gordon & Lee, 1990). The ability of unions to attain these goals is dependent on many things, including the satisfaction and commitment of their members (Fullagar & Barling, 1989; Gordon, Philpot, Burt, Thompson & Spiller, 1980).

Research on work satisfaction and organizational commitment suggests that they share common antecedents and significant variance (Mottaz, 1987; Steers, 1977; Porter, Steers, Mowday & Boulian, 1974). Because the company and the union are two different social organizations (Fukami & Larson, 1984), research needs to be conducted to determine whether union satisfaction and union commitment share common predictors. Identifying the correlates and predictors of union

commitment and union satisfaction is important because it has implications for the separateness or redundancy of union commitment and satisfaction.

To date, research has not been conducted to determine the degree of variance shared by union satisfaction and union commitment, or to validate the conceptual differences. Yet, unions that previously have met the perceived needs of rank and file members experience greater satisfaction and commitment of their members (Leicht, 1989). Very little research has systematically examined the predictors and correlates of union satisfaction. However, a major research focus has been the generalization of organizational commitment (Porter, Crampon & Smith, 1976; Steers, 1977) to the theoretical development and measurement of union commitment (Fullagar, 1986; Fullagar & Barling, 1987, 1989; Gordon, et al., 1980; Gordon, Beauvais & Ladd, 1984; Ladd, Gordon, Beauvais & Morgan, 1982; Barling, Wade & Fullagar, 1990).

The purpose of the present study is to investigate correlates and predictors of union satisfaction and union commitment. It examines the relationship between union experience variables and personal or demographic characteristics on union satisfaction and union commitment. In this study, union commitment and union

satisfaction will be correlated and regressed on a common set of predictor variables.

An investigation of the correlates and predictors of these constructs should serve to advance understanding of the nature and purpose of unions in an expanding global economy. Greater understanding of the variables effecting union commitment and union satisfaction may facilitate a union's ability to retain and recruit members, and to more effectively negotiate desired work outcomes.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

## Union Commitment

Union commitment is defined as the extent to which workers have a strong desire to remain union members, their willingness to exert a high degree of effort for their union, and a shared belief in union objectives and values (Gordon, et al., 1980; Klandermans, 1989). This definition is analogous to Porter et al.'s (1974) definition of organizational commitment.

Initial research on union commitment was conducted to determine the extent to which unionization competed with loyalty to an organization. It was generally hypothesized that commitment to the firm would preclude commitment to a union. However, early research results consistently suggested (Dean, 1954; Purcell, 1954; Stagner, 1956) that the two were positively correlated. Subsequent research (Fukami & Larson, 1984; Fullagar & Barling, 1987; Gallagher, 1984) confirmed this positive relationship, and it became a commonly accepted concept in the literature (Gallagher & Clark, 1989).

Magenau, Martin and Peterson (1988) found positive labor relations, high job satisfaction and positive decision making practices were consistently related to



dual commitment. They contend that increasing the level of satisfaction with one organization does not reduce satisfaction with the other.

Stagner (1956) stated that dual commitment is a result of a worker's tendency to perceive all aspects of a job as a unit. The job links the union to a specific employer which produces a situation that allows the union member to benefit from both simultaneously. Consequently, loyalty is generated to both organizations. (Leicht, 1989). Gallagher & Clark (1989) suggested that an increase in commitment to the union increases the commitment to the workplace. Leicht (1989) suggested that loyalty to a workplace is necessary to produce union commitment. Unless a job is perceived as a long-term commitment to an organization, the utility of being a union member is lost. Thus, union membership can act as a loyalty producing mechanism that ties workers to a specific firm. This linkage is important since it increases 'exit costs', since quitting involves severing both employer and union relationships (Leicht, 1989).

Several studies (Barling, et al., 1990; Fukami & Larson, 1984, Gallagher, Fiorito, Jarley, Jeong & Wakabayashi, 1988) that have examined the relationships between organizational and union commitment, with a

common set of predictors, report more differences than similarities in the variables related to each commitment. Other studies (Magenau, Martin & Peterson, 1988; Conlon & Gallagher, 1986; Angle & Perry, 1986; Fukami & Larson, 1984) not only found similar results but suggest that a positive labor-management relationship is the only variable that is consistently related to dual commitment.

Barling, et al. (1990) did not isolate a common predictor of both company and union commitment. They suggest that research should address divergent rather than parallel models of commitment. Consistent with Barling et al.'s (1990) suggestion, Johnson and Jones Johnson (1991) focused on divergent rather than parallel models and on differential predictors. They found that job satisfaction explained the most variance in company commitment (17%) and union satisfaction explained the most variance in union commitment (25%).

Much of the research on union commitment has focused on developing a measure to identify the determinants of this union attitude (Gordon et al., 1980; Schriesheim & Tsui, 1980; Friedman & Harvey, 1986; Thacker, Fields & Tetrick, 1989; Klandermans, 1989). Gordon et al.'s measurement of commitment yielded four empirical dimensions: union loyalty,

responsibility to the union, willingness to work for it, and belief in unionism. Loyalty was found to account for the most variance.

In replication studies, Liebowitz (1983) and Fullagar (1986) found similar factor structures. Both however, found a new factor that contrasted union loyalty with rewards for work and advancement in the company. A 1986 study by Friedman and Harvey questioned the dimensionality of Gordon et al.'s scale. Their research suggested a more parsimonious solution of two oblique factors - union attitudes and opinions, and pro-union behavior intentions - rather than four orthogonal ones.

Klandermans' (1989) analysis suggested that Friedman and Harvey's first factor, which combines Gordon et al.'s first two factors, is an improvement. His study, however, found that Friedman and Harvey's second factor did not improve on Gordon et al.'s last two factors. Klandermans also suggested that the loyalty scale alone is probably sufficient to measure the commitment construct.

### Union Satisfaction

Union satisfaction is defined as the overall affective orientation of individual members toward the union to which they belong, including contentment with increased wages and job security (Leicht, 1989; Gordon et. al, 1980). This definition is similar to Locke's (1976) definition of job satisfaction as a "pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences" (p. 1300).

There has been little systematic empirical research that has focused on union satisfaction as an outcome variable. Previously, researchers have generally used union satisfaction as a predictor variable, often measured with a single item asking respondents how satisfied they are with their unions (Chacko, 1985; Klandermans, 1989; Hoyman & Stallworth, 1987). However, little attention has been paid to the factors which lead to the development of satisfaction toward unions.

Much of the explanation for union satisfaction in previous research includes the concept of dual allegiance or dual commitment. If members believe wages, working conditions and job security to be sufficient, they more likely will be satisfied with both management and the union. Schriesheim & Tsui

(1980) utilized parallel measures of union and organizational attitudes and found a significantly high correlation between job satisfaction and union satisfaction, supporting the dual allegiance theory.

A positive correlation between union satisfaction and intrinsic and extrinsic job satisfaction was found Fullagar & Barling (1989) and Chacko (1985). Berger, Olson and Boudreau (1983) found that union members are more satisfied with the extrinsic aspects of their jobs than were non-unionized employees. While unions may not address intrinsic issues in collective bargaining, the union may be a source of intrinsic satisfaction by providing a collective voice to union members (Fullagar and Barling (1989).

Hirschman's (1970) exit/voice paradigm (also referred to as the exit, voice and loyalty (EVL) paradigm) provides a potential explanation for union satisfaction. The model contends that workers react to dissatisfaction in the work place by either leaving a firm in search of a better job, or expressing their concerns. Freeman & Medoff (1979) applied the exit/voice paradigm to unions. They argued that the potential of a union to effect management decisions is based in the union's ability to collectively voice concerns about work conditions and preferences. They

further contend that unions facilitate the 'voice' behavior since they provide avenues for members to express themselves through representation and grievance procedures.

Thus, dissatisfaction with specific working conditions should lead to 'voice behavior' through union participation, rather than quits (Freeman & Medoff, 1979; Kaufman, 1989). Subsequently, when the union 'voice' is successful in alleviating negative working conditions, satisfaction with the union increases (Hirsh & Addison, 1986). Hirsh & Addison (1986) also contend that the collective voice creates a mechanism for aggregating worker preferences in collective bargaining, allowing a firm to choose a more appropriate mix of compensation and work conditions. This in turn increases satisfaction with union outcomes.

Chacko (1985) found that satisfaction with the union was a major factor in a member's election to union office (Chacko, 1985). Dissatisfaction with the union, however, resulted in heightened participation in union activities by rank and file members. Chacko suggested that participation maybe more a manifestation of union democracy than of member support.

## Union Experiences

### Predictors

Potentially important variables effecting union commitment and union satisfaction include those that members experience with and in the union itself. The present study examines union socialization, union instrumentality and steward support. Tagliacozzo and Seidman (1958) contended that experiences within the union, with the union leadership, with the economic and social functions performed by the union, and the union's success in solving member's problems were all important in influencing members' view of unionism.

The socialization process that union members experience on joining the union provides the means of communicating to them the organization's views and its value to the new members (Gallagher & Clark, 1989). Social integration into the life of the union facilitates participation in union activities and increases members' identification with the union (Dean, 1954). Stagner (1956) prescribed early union activity as a way of attaching members to the union and increasing their commitment to it.

Gallagher and Clark (1989) found socialization of union members to be positively correlated to union commitment. Gordon et al. (1980) found that members with the highest levels of commitment reported positive socialization experiences in the first year of union membership. In their study, 50% of the variance in overall union commitment was accounted for by socialization influences (affiliation and contact with other members) and the level of participation in union activities. Similar relationships between union commitment and socialization were found by Fullagar (1986) and Fukami & Larson (1984).

Individuals may develop attitudes toward unions prior to actual involvement in the workforce, reflecting an anticipatory socialization process which predisposes them to union commitment. Hoyman & Stallworth (1989) found that respondents whose family members were also union members participated more in union activities. Deshpande & Fiorito (1989) found that the presence of a union member in a respondent's home enhanced pro-union voting. They contend that having a family member in a union is a source of pro-union information.



Union instrumentality, defined as a worker's perception that the union will attain for them desired work benefits, has also been associated with union attitudes (Fullagar & Barling, 1987; DeCotiis & LeLouarn, 1981). Perceptions of union instrumentality have been found to predict decisions to unionize (Deshpande & Fiorito, 1989; DeCotiis & LeLouarn, 1981), level of participation in union activities (Chacko, 1985), union loyalty (Fullagar & Barling, 1989) and union commitment (Thacker et al., 1990; Gordon et al., 1980). Gordon et al. (1980) and Fullagar & Barling (1989) suggested that perceived union instrumentality precedes union commitment.

The amount of information or knowledge that members possess about the contract (i.e. benefits) may be an indicator of instrumentality. Gallagher & Clark (1989) maintained that the more information a member had about the benefits afforded by the union, the more likely that member was to be committed to the union. Both Clark (1986) and Martin, Magenau and Peterson (1982) found a strong positive relationship between the knowledge members possessed about the union contract and commitment to the union.

Stewards provide a link between union members and union officials. As the union representative, they have the most contact with members. Thus, the way members view their stewards will influence their views of the union (Gallagher & Clark, 1989). Clark (1986) found a union member's evaluation of the steward to be an important determinant of union loyalty. Johnson and Jones Johnson (1991) also found steward support to be a significant predictor of union commitment. Thacker and Field's (1986) study, of the relationship between perceived accessibility to stewards and union loyalty and responsibility, suggested that steward accessibility was critical to union commitment.

Chacko (1985) found that perceived effectiveness of union stewards was significantly related to the level of member participation. Similar results have been found by Nicholson, Ursell & Lubbock in 1981, who reported that union member involvement increased when stewards showed concern and consideration to members.

### Correlates

Investigation of the effects of personal or demographic characteristics that have consistently appeared in union commitment research includes gender,

race, age, level of education and tenure (Gallagher & Clark, 1989). Because this study's sample was 94% white male, the analysis was restricted to white males. Thus, race and gender are not included. However, members' gender (Gordon et al., 1980) and race (Fullagar & Barling, 1989) have been associated with union commitment.

Research results regarding age and commitment to the union are inconsistent. Some researchers (Martin & Peterson 1987; Conlon & Gallagher, 1987) have found a significant positive relationship between union commitment and age. However, others (Fukami & Larson, 1984; Thacker & Fields, 1986) found a negative relationship or no relationship at all (Martin et al., 1986).

Previous studies on dual commitment have often used job tenure as a predictor variable (Clark, 1986; Fukami & Larson, 1984). Because the focus in the present study is on union commitment and satisfaction and union experiences variables, union tenure is used. A 1990 study by Barling et al. found union tenure to be the only significant predictor of union commitment. Similarly, Johnson and Jones Johnson (1991) found a

positive correlation between union tenure and union commitment, but, union tenure was not a predictor of union commitment.

Education has been negatively associated with union commitment, but not significant (Johnson and Jones Johnson, 1991; Barling et al., 1990; Fullagar & Barling, 1989; Gordon et al., 1980; Clark, 1986). Hundly (1989) found that workers in jobs that require greater education are less likely to prefer unionism as a means of advancing their interests.

#### Statement of Hypotheses

Based on the previous literature review, five hypothesis are investigated in this study:

1. Union socialization is significantly and positively related to union commitment and union satisfaction. The greater the socialization, the greater the union commitment and satisfaction.
2. Perceived union instrumentality is significantly and positively related to union commitment and union satisfaction. The greater the perceived union instrumentality, the greater the union commitment and satisfaction.

3. Steward support is significantly and positively related to union commitment and satisfaction. The greater the steward support, the greater the union commitment and satisfaction.
4. Education is significantly and negatively related to union commitment and satisfaction.
5. Union tenure is significantly and positively related to union commitment and satisfaction.

## METHODS

## Sample

The data for the present study were obtained during the summer of 1988. Participants in the sample were members of a local operating in a rural midwestern right to work (RTW) state. The local retained the right to strike and represented 1,100 employees of a regional plant of a national tire and rubber manufacturing company. The local is affiliated with an international union that represents an estimated 150,000 workers worldwide. The project was sponsored by the top officials and the executive board leadership of the union local and the international. The study was approved by the Human Subjects Review Committee at Iowa State University prior to distribution of the questionnaire (see appendix for Human Subjects Approval form and questionnaire items).

A sample of 550 members was chosen from the local's mailing list by simple random selection using tables of random numbers. A cover letter from the international's research director and the local's president was mailed along with each questionnaire. The letter outlined the purpose of the study, encouraged participation, and assured anonymity. Subjects were requested not to identify themselves in the questionnaire in any way.

Questionnaires were returned by 291 members, yielding an initial response rate of 52.9%. Preliminary examination eliminated 25 responses for lack of completeness. This left 266 usable questionnaires for a response rate of 48.3%.

The local had a small support staff and maintained no demographic information on its membership. The company was not a sponsor of this research, so there was no access to members' files in the company's personnel records. Consequently, it was impossible to cross-compare the sample's responses to more objective behavioral data or demographic statistics for the population.

The sample was 94% male and 93% white, and ranged from 19 to 60 years of age, with a mean age of 42 years. The average number of years on a job in the plant was 16.2 years and the average tenure in the union was 16.7 years. The mean years of education was 12.53 years, with 33 percent of the respondents possessing one year or more of college. The median salary level was in the range of \$25,000 to \$29,000 per year. In this sample, workers filled a variety of unskilled, skilled, and technical blue-collar jobs in the plant. The analysis was restricted to white males (N=234).

## Measurement

Dependent variables

The dependent variables, union commitment and union satisfaction, are measured by two different scales. Union commitment is a nine-item short form of the union commitment questionnaire by Gordon et al. (1980). All nine items were rated on a five-point Likert-type scale and indicated how much respondents agree or disagree with such statements as, "I feel a sense of pride being a part of a union, I have little confidence and trust in most members of a union, and my values and the values of labor unions are not very similar." The coefficient alpha for the scale is 0.84. Negatively worded items were reverse scored.

A four-item union satisfaction scale measured satisfaction with the local. Respondents were asked their satisfaction with elected officials, representation provided by union stewards, opportunities to receive an education about organized labor and the local's involvement in national politics. Responding occurred on a four-point Likert-type scale which ranged from very satisfied (4) to very dissatisfied (1). The coefficient alpha for the scale is 0.79.



Independent variables

Three variables are used to measure union experiences - union socialization, union instrumentality (knowledge of union benefits and union performance), and steward support.

Union socialization: Four items, rated on a five-point scale, assessed union socialization. These items assessed the quality of interaction with union officials. Respondents were asked to rate the union officials on the frequency with which they see, write, and talk on the telephone, the amount of time they talk and visit, the number of local union officials they know by name and the number of union officials they know well enough to visit or call on. The coefficient alpha for the scale is 0.78. Responses ranged from 5 (great socialization) to 1 (little socialization). One item, rated on a four-point scale, assessed the importance of family socialization. Respondents were asked to rate the importance of the organized labor movement in the home while she or he was growing up. The responses were dichotomized, scoring 1 for important and 0 for not important.

Union instrumentality: A principal component analysis with varimax rotation was computed on ten knowledge of fringe benefits items and two union performance items. Two interpretable components emerged. The first component was labelled "knowledge of benefits" ( $\alpha = 0.90$ ), accounting for 47% of the overall variance. The items (with their loadings in parenthesis) on this component were medical or hospital insurance (0.79), dental insurance (0.69), life insurance (0.85), retirement plan (0.83), educational benefits (0.70), paid sick leave (0.66), paid vacation (0.56), workmen's compensation (0.73) accident and sickness insurance (0.79) and the employee assistance program (0.69). Responding occurred on a five-point Likert-like scale which ranged from 5 (a great deal of knowledge) to 1 (none at all).

The second component was labelled "union performance" (9% of overall variance explained;  $\alpha = 0.71$ ). The two items in this component

measured whether the local was pursuing an agenda for workers (0.69) and whether the local fulfilled the workers wants and needs (0.52). The response scale ranged from 0 (no performance) to 2 (great performance). Results of the factor analysis are in Table A in the appendix.

Steward Support: Steward support consisted of a four item scale constructed by Johnson and Jones Johnson (1991), designed to parallel Papper's (1983) supervisor support scale. The four items were rated on a five-point scale ranging from (5) strongly agree to (1) strongly disagree. Respondents were asked to rate whether the steward gives me emotional support, makes my work life easier, can be relied on when things get tough at work and helps me solve work related problems. The coefficient alpha for the scale is 0.90.

Demographic Characteristics: The personal characteristics were assessed by single-item questions asking for age and union tenure in years, and educational level in years of formal schooling completed.

### Analytic Procedure

Stepwise multiple regression analyses was computed separately for union commitment and union satisfaction. Similar to Fukami and Larson (1984), Barling et al. (1990), and Johnson and Jones Johnson (1991), tenure and education were entered first in the regression equation to control for their effects. Age was dropped from the analysis due to potential multicollinearity with union tenure ( $r=.74$ ). In previous similar research, job tenure has been most frequently used. Because the focus in the present study was on unions, union tenure was used. However, job and union tenure were highly correlated ( $r=.96$ ).

Utilizing a stepwise multiple regression analysis has the advantage of both identifying the statistically significant independent variables that influence each attitude, and providing an estimate of the proportion of the variance in each attitude accounted for by the model considered.

## RESULTS

Correlational and multiple regression analyses were used to assess the relationships between personal characteristics, union experience variables and union commitment and union satisfaction.

Bivariate

Table 1 presents the zero-order correlation coefficients between union commitment, union satisfaction, union experience variables and demographic characteristics.

A moderate correlation ( $r=.46$ ,  $p < .001$ ) was found between union commitment and union satisfaction. All of the union experience variables were positively and significantly correlated with both union commitment and union satisfaction.

Union commitment was significantly correlated with union socialization ( $r=.49$ ,  $p < .001$ ), steward support ( $r=.43$ ,  $p < .001$ ), union performance ( $r=.42$ ,  $p < .001$ ), knowledge of union benefits ( $r=.22$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and family socialization ( $r=.17$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Similarly, union satisfaction was significantly correlated with union

Table 1. Correlation matrix<sup>a</sup> for all variables included in the study

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Commitment	-									
2. Satisfaction	.46	-								
3. Union social.	.49	.36	-							
4. Family social.	.13	.18	.09	-						
5. Benefits	.22	.17	.45	-.02	-					
6. Performance	.42	.65	.39	.20	.26	-				
7. Steward support	.43	.54	.34	.19	.09	.45	-			
8. Age	-.02	.15	.34	-.09	.31	.10	-.06	-		
9. Union tenure	.10	.19	.51	-.01	.41	.18	.10	.74	-	
10. Education	-.08	-.14	-.01	-.05	.20	-.14	-.11	-.08	-.19	-

<sup>a</sup>  $r > .11$  @  $p < .05$ ,  $r > .18$  @  $p < .01$  and  $r > .22$  @  $p < .001$ .

performance ( $r=.65$ ,  $p < .001$ ), steward support ( $r=.54$ ,  $p < .001$ ), union socialization ( $r=.36$ ,  $p < .001$ ), knowledge of benefits ( $r=.18$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and family socialization ( $r=.15$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

Neither union tenure or education were significantly correlated with union commitment. However, both were significantly correlated with union satisfaction. The correlates with union satisfaction are union tenure ( $r=.19$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and education ( $r=-.14$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

#### Multivariate

Stepwise multiple regression was used to estimate the effects of the union experience variables on union commitment and union satisfaction separately. The results are presented in Table 2.

The results indicate that the union experience variables are important predictors of union commitment and union satisfaction. The  $R^2$  values of .44 and .56 respectively for union commitment and union satisfaction indicate that they explain a significant amount of variance. Union socialization, union performance and steward support significantly predict both union commitment and union satisfaction. Union

Table 2. Effects of demographic and union experience variables on union commitment and union satisfaction

Predictor Variable for Commitment	R <sup>2</sup>	R <sup>2</sup> adj.	Unstd beta	Std beta	F
<u>Personal Characteristics</u>					
Union Tenure	.002	.009	.034	.049	0.215
Education Level	.012	.011	-.513	-.097	0.513
<u>Union Experiences</u>					
Union Socialization	.314	.290	.940	.644	12.964***
Family Socialization	.317	.285	.694	.060	9.758
Knowledge of Benefits	.344	.304	.127	.187	8.687
Union Performance	.385	.341	1.604	.243	8.572*
Steward Support	.444	.396	.564	.335	9.254**
<u>Variance Explained by All Variables</u>	.444	.396			
Predictor Variable for Satisfaction	R <sup>2</sup>	R <sup>2</sup> adj.	Unstd beta	Std beta	F
<u>Personal Characteristics</u>					
Union Tenure	.006	.005	.029	.079	0.524
Education Level	.007	.017	-.068	-.024	0.283
<u>Union Experiences</u>					
Union Socialization	.151	.119	.349	.453	4.788***
Family Socialization	.208	.169	1.524	.252	5.247*
Knowledge of Benefits	.214	.165	.033	.093	4.312
Union Performance	.515	.478	2.232	.641	13.809***
Steward Support	.563	.523	.263	.300	14.144**
<u>Variance Explained by All Variables</u>	.563	.523			

\*\*\* Significant at  $p < .001$ .

\*\* Significant at  $p < .01$ .

\* Significant at  $p < .05$ .

The order in which the variables were entered into the equation did not alter the results.



socialization and steward support are both highly significant predictors for both union commitment and union satisfaction. In addition, family socialization significantly predicts union satisfaction, but not union commitment.

The results of the analysis suggest that 30% of union commitment is explained by union socialization ( $F=12.96$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\beta=.94$ ), steward support explains 9% ( $F=9.25$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $\beta=.56$ ) and another 4% is explained by union performance ( $F=8.57$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $\beta=.60$ ).

In contrast, most of union satisfaction (30%) is explained by union performance ( $F=13.81$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\beta=.72$ ). Union socialization explains 14% ( $F=4.79$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\beta=.35$ ), family socialization another 6% ( $F=5.25$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $\beta=.52$ ) and steward support 5% ( $F=14.14$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $\beta=.26$ ).

## DISCUSSION

The present study examined union commitment and union satisfaction, using a common set of correlates and predictor variables. The results indicate that union commitment and union satisfaction are significantly correlated. However, the evidence also suggests that the union experience variables included in the model do differentially influence union commitment and union satisfaction.

As hypothesized, socialization is significantly and positively correlated to, and predicts both union commitment and union satisfaction. Union socialization explains 30% of the variance in union commitment and 14% of union satisfaction.

In this study, union socialization assesses only the quality of rank and file interactions with union officials. Union commitment research has previously found interactions, largely with union members, to be an important predictor of union commitment (Gallagher & Clark, 1989; Fullagar & Barling, 1989; Fullagar, 1986; Fukami & Larson, 1984; Gordon et al., 1980). The leadership styles of union leaders may influence commitment and satisfaction. Perhaps union officials

exert a normative influence on members that facilitates identification and satisfaction with the union.

A recent study by Jarley, Kuruvilla and Casteel (1990), also found that union representatives' handling of internal relations is a major determinant of union satisfaction. However, even more important for union satisfaction is the interaction between the members themselves. Hoyman and Stallworth (1987) found that one of the strongest predictors of union participation was having friends in the union. Given that level of participation is strongly correlated with union satisfaction (Chacko, 1985), it is suggested that socialization with other union members maybe a better predictor of union satisfaction than socialization with union officials.

The hypothesis that union instrumentality would be significantly and positively related to union commitment and union satisfaction is supported by union performance but not knowledge of benefits. Union performance significantly predicts both union commitment and satisfaction. However, it explains 30% of the variance in union satisfaction but only 4% of the variance in union commitment. Thus, union performance has a powerful impact on union satisfaction, but virtually no impact on union

commitment. Perceived performance appears to relate to an overall contentment or discontentment with the union. In other words, psychological satisfaction with the union is enhanced when members perceive the union as instrumental to the achievement of valued outcomes.

In contrast, knowledge of benefits does not predict either union commitment or satisfaction. As implied by Gallagher and Clark (1989), levels of information and knowledge of benefits is probably more closely related to the union socialization process than to perceived union instrumentality. The high correlation between knowledge of benefits and union socialization ( $r=.45$ ,  $p < .001$ ) adds support to this contention. Another indication that supports the above assertion is the reduction in the variance explained in satisfaction when union performance is grouped with knowledge of benefits. Singly, union performance explains 30% of union satisfaction. When grouped with knowledge of benefits, union instrumentality explains less than seven percent percent of the variance in union satisfaction.

The results confirm the hypothesis that steward support is significantly and positively related to both union commitment and union satisfaction. This is consistent with union commitment research (Clark &

Gallagher, 1988; Clark, 1986; Thacker & Fields, 1986) that also found workers' perceptions of their stewards to be a significant predictor of union commitment.

In the model, steward support explains 9% of the variance in union commitment and 5% in union satisfaction. When entered as a single predictor, steward support is very strong ( $R^2 = .33$ ,  $F = 41.97$ ,  $p < .0001$  for union commitment and  $R^2 = .34$ ,  $F = 42.35$ ,  $p < .0001$  for union satisfaction), but again essentially explains the same amount of variance in both constructs.

As predicted, and consistent with other findings (Johnson & Jones Johnson, 1991; Barling et al., 1990, Fullagar & Barling, 1989), education is negatively related to both union commitment and union satisfaction. It is not a predictor of either attitude. Similarly, union tenure is positively related to both union commitment and satisfaction as predicted, but, consistent with Johnson and Jones Johnson's 1991 findings, has no predictive ability.

The results of this study suggest that three union experience variables - union socialization, union performance and steward support - are important predictors of both union commitment and union

satisfaction. Union socialization explains a significant amount of variance for both union commitment and union satisfaction. These results give additional support to the findings of Fullagar and Barling (1989) and Gordon et al. (1980), that union socialization experiences positively influence union attitudes. The significant correlations between union socialization and knowledge of benefits ( $r=.45$ ), union performance ( $r=.39$ ) and steward support ( $r=.37$ ), suggests that union socialization provides the contact with union officials and other members which is the basis for identification and affiliation with the union.

Socialization is necessary for the transmission of information, values and union roles to rank and file members. Stewards play a very important role in the transmission of information about the contract, and especially in knowledge about the grievance process (Gallagher & Clark, 1989; Clark & Gallagher, 1988; Clark, 1986; Thacker & Fields, 1986). The moderate correlation between steward support and union socialization ( $r=.37$ ,  $p < .001$ ) found in this study supports this relationship.

Stewards also play an important role in members' perceptions of the effectiveness of unions. As Gallagher and Clark (1989) point out, stewards represent the union in day-to-day contact with members. Consequently, the way members view their stewards influence the way members view their union. The correlation of .45 ( $p < .001$ ) found between steward support and union performance in this study adds additional support to their findings.

Perceived union performance was found into be the best predictor for union satisfaction in this study. This is consistent with Jarley, et al.'s (1990) findings that perceived union performance can improve satisfaction with union representation. The results are also congruent with Chacko's (1985) and Nicholson et al.'s (1981) suggestions that those unions perceived to be ineffective in obtaining desired outcomes and in being responsive to the rank and file are vulnerable to member apathy while effective unions experience member commitment and satisfaction.

### Limitations

Like previous union research, self-reporting measures were utilized. Responses were recorded using pencil and paper, increasing the probability of error. Given the unavailability of objective measures, it was not possible to establish whether or not the self-reported data served as a proxy for measures of actual behavior. Measurement error was reduced through the use of both negatively and positively phrased items, a variety of response formats and separation of scales in the questionnaire.

Because the decision as to which items would be included in the questionnaire was largely determined by the union council, the items and subsequent scales may not have precisely tapped the constructs being measured. In particular, the scale for union socialization did not assess early socialization. Buchanan (1974) found that the earlier socialization experiences were initiated, the more potent their effects in influencing how later experiences were interpreted. Never the less, the scale had acceptable internal consistency and was consistent with patterns of previous research (Gordon et al., 1980).



Similarly, the union satisfaction scale included two items (opportunities to receive an education about organized labor and local's involvement in national politics), suggested by the union council, that traditionally have not been included in scales of satisfaction. However, the coefficient alpha indicated that the scale had good internal consistency.

Because the results presented here were obtained from a fairly homogeneous sample, they may mask important differences in experiences among unions. Moreover, the results are specific to white male, blue collar laborers in a right to work state. Therefore, comparisons and generalizations are limited. Future research is needed to investigate these constructs with more diverse union members and across sections of the economy (i.e., public and craft unions).

#### Future research

A longitudinal research design is important, especially when making predictions about the effects of process variables on commitment and satisfaction (Beauvais, Scholl and Cooper, 1991). Future research should also include other variables that might have a significant impact on union outcomes and experiences.

For example, a union's past effectiveness in imposing sanctions through strike activity may significantly effect the level of perceived instrumentality of unions. In addition, the quality of labor-management relations has been found to be significantly related to union commitment and union participation (Angle & Perry, 1986). Recent research by Clark (1989) also suggests that union members' attitudes toward their stewards and commitment to the union are important determinants of the quality of union-management relations. Future research should investigate the impact of labor-management relations on union commitment and union satisfaction.

Systematic investigation of the normative influences or normative pressures of socialization into the union may enhance understanding of both union commitment and union satisfaction. Fullagar and Barling (1991) contend that experiences during the initial stages of organizational socialization may be directly generalizable to labor organizations. Thus, the impact of early socialization experiences on commitment and satisfaction should be investigated.

Research is also required to examine the inter-relationship of union commitment and union satisfaction to establish whether or not they are redundant

constructs. Similar research by Mottaz (1987) on organizational commitment and work satisfaction found a reciprocal effect between satisfaction and commitment, with satisfaction having a greater effect on commitment than the reverse. His results suggest that a strong commitment to an organization is dependent on achieving high levels of satisfaction.

### Conclusion

This research has investigated the predictors and correlates of union satisfaction and union commitment. It has identified union experience variables which significantly predict these union attitudes. It has also suggested areas in which unions can influence the level of commitment and satisfaction of its members.

The results suggest that socialization of members should be a priority for unions. Resources should be expended to identify and develop both the socialization process and effective agents of union socialization. Efforts by union officials, stewards and active union members to immerse both new and inactive members in the social as well as the business activities of the union should result in increased commitment and satisfaction with the union. The finding that family socialization

is a significant predictor of union satisfaction suggest that unions should also publicize union outcomes and events to improve the image of labor unions in the larger society.

The effectiveness of the union in meeting member desires and expectations is important to union members. Unions that pursue agendas that meet members' needs and wants will be more likely to have members that are satisfied with, and committed to the union. Providing information on grievance procedures, the contract, fringe benefits and other union activities should improve perceptions of union performance.

Efforts to increase satisfaction and commitment should also include expanding the role of union stewards. Because of the important role stewards appear to have in the transmission of union knowledge and information, improving the performance of stewards through training, support and recognition would likely have a positive effect on union performance and effectiveness. Moreover, training programs for union stewards could be evaluated in terms of their impact on the commitment and satisfaction engendered among rank and file members.

Models of union commitment and union satisfaction in which both attitudinal and normative influences are incorporated, may improve our understanding of both commitment and satisfaction, as well as our understanding of how they are linked to behavioral outcomes such as participation. The Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) and Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) general model of behavior provides a conceptual framework for understanding attitudinal and normative influences on union commitment and union satisfaction.

The effectiveness of unions in organizing, bargaining, and retaining members is directly related to the level of commitment and satisfaction among current and potential members (Leicht, 1989). The ability of unions to attain desired goals is influenced by many factors, including prior union performance (i.e., grievance settlements, strike outcomes, past wage concessions), union size and member participation. Research has shown that participation is directly related to the level of commitment unions are able to generate, and that voluntary involvement in union activities is what ensures the attainment of goals (Fullagar & Barling, 1989; Gordon et al., 1980).

From management's perspective, having committed and satisfied union members may also be important. Satisfaction with wages, job security and working conditions - issues influenced in the collective bargaining process - has been found to be related to union loyalty (Conlon & Gallagher, 1987; Gordon, et al., 1980). Union commitment and satisfaction could contribute to peaceful contract resolutions and cooperation between organized workers and management, as opposed to the adversarial relationship that has typically existed. In addition, the findings of numerous studies (Gallagher & Clark, 1989; Clark, 1989; Clark, 1986; Angle & Perry, 1986; Gallagher, 1984; Fukami and Larson, 1982; Gordon et al., 1980) have shown that employer commitment is significantly and positively related to union commitment, particularly when there is a positive labor-management relationship.

That unions and management are not competing for the commitment and satisfaction of workers is encouraging at a time when increased global competition has made labor-management cooperation important (Magenau, Martin & Peterson, 1988). The imperatives of quality and productivity, required by expanded competition, can only be achieved through an active,

committed work force. The future role of unions will increasingly be to facilitate goal convergence, more closely aligning the interests of employees and employers (Lewin, 1989). As such, they will continue to act as a "voice enhancing mechanism" in the labor-management relationship.

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APPENDIX

DATE: March 22, 1988

TO: Human Subjects Review Committee

FROM: W. Roy Johnson, Assistant Professor of Psychology

RE: Clarification of Information on the Use of Human Subjects

The Survey of Quality of Union/Work Life Participation provides each member of this local a chance to respond to the issues that affect his/her work life and union. It will measure the effects recent negotiations have had on work attitudes, levels of stress, members' health, methods of coping, relationships, etc.

#### Subject Selection

This survey will be mailed to all United Rubber Workers - URW (approximately 1800) employed with Bridgestone, the joint Japanese-American plant in LaVergne, Tennessee. This arrangement is in negotiation through the International URW offices. Mr. Carl Dimengo, Assistant Research Director for the International URW strongly supports the research, and a letter similar to the Local 310 is pending (Please see Carl Dimengo's letter to Ron Smiley attached).

#### Method of Data Collection

Computer generated mailing labels for URW members employed with Bridgestone will be provided. Iowa State University's printing and mailing service will be used. The cover page of the questionnaire will emphasize confidentiality, voluntary participation, as well as the 30-45 minutes necessary to complete the questionnaire.

#### Maintain Confidentiality

The risk for human subjects in this project should be minimal since findings will be reported in a statistical fashion and will represent categories of individuals rather than individuals themselves. This will ensure that the member's name or address cannot be identified. Numbers will appear on the questionnaire and will be removed as soon as received. A list will be maintained of numbers and corresponding names. This list will be destroyed after the survey part of the project is completed.

RJ:pm

Attachment



## QUESTIONNAIRE ITEMS

Union Commitment

Listed below are a few statements that represent possible feelings you may have about unions in general. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement. Response categories are

SD = strongly disagree	SA = strongly agree
D = disagree	A = agree
N = neither agree nor disagree	

1. I feel a sense of pride being a part of a union.
2. I have little confidence and trust in most members of a union.
3. My values and the values of labor unions are not very similar.
4. The record of U.S. labor unions is a good example of what dedicated people can get done.
5. I would be willing to put in a great deal of effort beyond that normally expected of members in order to make a union successful.
6. I feel little loyalty toward unions.
7. If asked, I would serve on a committee for a union.
8. Given the choice, I would rather work in a union company vs a nonunion company.
9. If asked, I would do special work to help the local union.

Union Satisfaction

For each of the following questions, please indicate the words which are closest to your feelings. The response categories are

1 = very dissatisfied	3 = somewhat satisfied
2 = somewhat dissatisfied	4 = very satisfied

1. In general, how satisfied are you with your elected officials?
2. What about representation provided by your union steward?
3. What about the opportunities to receive an education about organized labor?
4. What about the local's involvement in national politics?

Union Socialization

Please indicate which response best describes your perceptions of your union's functioning.

1. How often do you see, write or talk on the telephone to your union officials?
 

1 = never	4 = few times a week
2 = few times a year	5 = almost daily
3 = few times a month	
2. How satisfied are you with the amount of time that you talk or visit with your union officials?
 

1 = very dissatisfied	4 = satisfied
2 = dissatisfied	5 = very satisfied
3 = neither satisfied or dissatisfied	

3. How many local union officials do you know by name?

- |                    |                    |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| 1 = almost none    | 4 = more than half |
| 2 = less than half | 5 = all            |
| 3 = half           |                    |

4. How many union officials do you know well enough to visit or call on?

- |          |         |          |          |
|----------|---------|----------|----------|
| 1 = none | 2 = few | 3 = some | 4 = many |
|----------|---------|----------|----------|

### Family Socialization

How important was the organized labor movement to those in your home while you were growing up?

- |                          |                      |
|--------------------------|----------------------|
| 1 = not important at all | 3 = fairly important |
| 2 = not too important    | 4 = very important   |

### Union Performance

Please indicate the response which best describes your perceptions of your union's functioning.

1. Given the chances your local union has had, how well has it done in fulfilling the workers' want and needs?

- |                    |                 |
|--------------------|-----------------|
| 1 = lousy          | 4 = fairly well |
| 2 = not too well   | 5 = very well   |
| 3 = just all right |                 |

2. In general, do you think your local is pursuing an agenda drawn from the needs and desires of its members?

- |        |         |                |
|--------|---------|----------------|
| 1 = no | 2 = yes | 3 = don't know |
|--------|---------|----------------|

Union Benefits

How much do you know about each of the benefits that you receive on your job?

1 = nothing at all

2 = a little

3 = some

4 = quite a bit

5 = a great deal

1. medical or hospital insurance
2. dental insurance
3. life insurance
4. retirement plan
5. educational benefits
6. paid sick leave
7. paid vacation
8. workmen's compensation
9. accident and sickness insurance
10. employees' assistance program

Steward Support

Use the following scale to rate your steward:

SD = strongly disagree	SA = strongly agree
D = disagree	A = agree
N = neither agree or disagree	

1. My steward gives me emotional support.
2. My steward makes my work life easier.
3. My steward can be relied on when things get tough at work.
4. My steward helps me solve work related problems.

Union Tenure

How many years have you been a member of your local? \_\_\_\_\_

Education

Please circle the highest grade of school or year of college you have completed?

00 01 02 03 04 05 06 07 08 09 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17+

Table C. Results of factor analysis of twelve item union instrumentality scale (principle components and varimax rotation)

Instrumentality Items	Factor Matrix Loadings	
	Factor 1	Factor 2
Medical or hospital insurance	.79	.13
Dental insurance	.67	-.15
Life insurance	.85	.07
Retirement plan	.83	.03
Educational benefits	.70	-.27
Paid sick leave	.66	-.14
Paid vacation	.56	.38
Workman's compensation	.73	.05
Accident & sickness insurance	.79	.14
Employee's assistance program	.59	-.07
Pursuing workers' agenda	-.33	.69
Local fulfills workers needs and wants	.28	.52
% of common variance	46.5%	8.9%

Table D. Descriptive data for study variables

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Alpha Coeff.	Min./	Max.
Union Commitment	34.72	5.65	0.84	9	45
Union Satisfaction	10.61	2.83	0.79	4	16
Union Socialization	13.36	3.84	0.78	4	20
Family Socialization	2.47	1.14	----	1	4
Knowledge of Benefits	29.00	8.81	0.90	10	50
Union Performance	1.16	0.76	0.71	0	2
Steward Support	13.04	3.86	0.90	4	20
Age	41.96	9.55	----	19	60
Union Tenure	16.66	9.98	----	1	40
Education Level	12.53	1.10	----	10	17